Demand for Trade and Industry Status to Agriculture

2483. SHRI KRISHNA KUMAR BIRLA: Will tHe PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Agriculture experts in the country have demanded that the sector be treated on par with trade and industry;

(b) if so, the reaction of Government on such demand;

(c) whether any hurdle exists in according trade and industry status to agriculture; and

(d) if so, the details thereof and steps Government propose to take to remove such hurdles?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SOMPAL): (a) to (d) A suggestion to treat agriculture on par with industry has been made on different occasions. The National Policy on Agriculture, currently in the final stage of drafting, envisages a positive trade and investment climate for agriculture at par with industry. The intention is to bestow on the agricultural sector, in as many respects as possible, benefits similar to those obtaining the industry such as easy availability of credit and other inputs, free movement of agricultural products and infrastructural facilities for development of agri-business, etc.

Training for Efficient use of water for Agriculture

2484. SHRI SATISCHANDRA SITARAM PRADHAN: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government propose to develop a methodology for training panchayats in efficient use of water for agriculture;

(b) if so, te details tereof; and

(c) if not, te reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SOMPAL): (a) to (c) There is no formal programme for training panchayats in efficient use of water for agriculture, However, under the Centrally Sponsored Scheme of Command Area Development, assistance is provided to the States by the Ministry of Water Resources for adaptive trials, demonstration and training which disseminate the technical know-how of different facts of efficient water management. The training is imparted to local farmers and functionaries in the Command Areas.

Refinance Facility to North-East Farmers

2485. SHRI W. ANGOU SINGH: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) steps taken up by Government to continue the refinance facility to the poor farmers of the North-East States for their crop production;

(b) whether Government are contemplating a new loaning plicy for the North-East farmers; and

(c) if so, when will it be extended, if not, why?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SOMPAL): (a) With a view to continue the refinance facility to the poor farmers of the North-East States for their crop prodction and to ensure timely and adequate flow of credit to the agriculture sector, National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) have taken various steps which inter-alia include the following:—

(i) Minimum recovery norms for sanction of credit limits to banks to facilitate flow of credit have been relaxed.

(ii) Norms in the discipline of Minimum Involvement of Internal lendable resources of the banks have been relaxed.

(iii) Banks in North-Eastern Region (NER) are charged interest at minimum rate i.e. 4% irrespective of their level of dependence on short term (SAO) refinance from NABARD.

(iv) In view of weak structure of the cooperatives and Regional Rural Banks (RRBs), the Commercial banks in the region were encouraged to avail refinance from NABARD for financing of all eligible Agriculture and Rural Development activities.